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Marvin C. Wilson Retires as Pharmacy School's Associate Dean

Administrator retiring after nearly 43 years of service to the school

JUNE 30, 2013 BY BARBARA LAGO AND ERIN GARRETT



Marvin C. Wilson is retiring after nearly 43 years of service to the UM School of Pharmacy.

OXFORD, Miss. – When budding pharmacists gather each spring to receive their coveted Doctor of Pharmacy degree, the moment is especially sweet for Marvin C. Wilson, the man who recruited many of them to the University of Mississippi. As he calls the graduates' names, summoning each to cross the stage and receive their degree, Wilson beams as broadly as any proud father watching his children graduate from college, prepared to make their way in the world.

By the time they graduate, Wilson has worked with many of these students for seven years, helping them navigate three years of pre-professional and four years of professional curricula.

Despite retiring at the end of June, Wilson plans to be calling students' names at School of Pharmacy commencement ceremonies for seven more years. That's because he is already invested in these future graduates' lives. He has advised them about their courses, awarded them scholarships and encouraged them to focus on their goals. He has also made promises to them and their parents, and he wants to celebrate these two milestones with them.

"His commitment to students, especially those he is advising, is unparalleled," said David D. Allen, the school's dean. "He has a huge heart, and he wants everybody to do well. He takes it personally when someone stumbles, then helps them get back on the right track."

During his nearly 43 years at Ole Miss, Wilson has been involved in the education of thousands of pharmacy students, first as a pharmacology professor, then chair of pharmacology and finally associate dean for academic and student affairs. As the latter, he advised pharmacy's early-entry students but was so dedicated to helping all students that he became their mentor, confidant and friend for the remainder of their academic journeys.

"Many students considered him a sensitive, approachable figure," said Jillian Foster (PharmD 04, MBA 08), director of pharmacy at Baptist Memorial Hospital-North Mississippi. "Because it was often confidential, the behind-the-scenes compassion he offered students in need is something we will never fully comprehend, but we know he touched many lives and figured out a way to help them succeed."

Among those whose lives he touched is David F. Gregory (BSPH 84, PharmD 99), director of education, research and clinical services in the pharmacy administration department at Vanderbilt University.

"He was known as a man of integrity who understood the value of each student and challenged all of them to reach greater heights within their circle of influence," Gregory said.

For many students, Wilson did so long after they graduated.

"Even as a student, he encouraged me to exercise leadership," said Foster, who became president of the Mississippi Society of Hospital Pharmacists, serves on the Mississippi Pharmacists Association's executive committee, chairs MPhA's education committee and is president of the pharmacy school's alumni chapter.

"Over the years, he has continued to offer so many subtle words of encouragement," Foster said. "He has a quiet way of boosting the confidence of those he believes in, and I so much appreciate the respect he has shown me over the last decade."

To those who followed Wilson into academia rather than pharmacy practice, he was the perfect role model.

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OXFORD, Miss. – Eleven University of Mississippi students spent their winter break learning about the people who work behind the scenes of the American government in Washington, D.C. Lead by Jonathan Klingler, assistant professor of political science, the students of Pol 391: Applied Politics met not with candidates, but with the people who make candidates'

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OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy's new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying "thank you." "It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to abate. The Federal Reserve's

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"During pharmacy school, he was one of those who made me think about going to graduate school and becoming a faculty member," said Donna West-Strum (BSPH 95, MS 97, PhD 99), UM professor and chair of pharmacy administration. "He mentored me and helped me make those choices. As a new department chair, I knew I could go to his office and find someone who would listen and provide appropriate advice or comment because he strives for excellence in everything he does."

Kenneth B. Roberts, UM's pharmacy school dean from 1989 to 2000, tapped Wilson to become the school's first associate dean for academic affairs in 1994, when pharmacy education was moving from the bachelor's degree to the Doctor of Pharmacy, or Pharm.D., degree.

"I needed an academic affairs person to lead the transition internally, so I could lead the transition externally," said Roberts, Slone professor for community pharmacy leadership and pharmacy dean emeritus at the University of Kentucky. "Marvin was one of the most highly regarded faculty members because of what he taught and how he taught. He was extremely rigorous, but the students loved him for it."

Wilson chaired the committee Roberts appointed to develop the Pharm.D. curriculum, was made associate dean to implement it, then helped implement the school's problem-based learning curriculum. "Both initiatives drew the eyes of pharmacy educators across the nation," Roberts said, and gave the pharmacy school a big boost in national rankings.

Barbara G. Wells, UM's pharmacy dean from 2001 to 2011, was the one who added "and student" to Wilson's associate dean for academic and student affairs title.

"Marvin provided the essential leadership in developing, implementing and managing a quality program for academic support, student development and student advocacy," Wells said. "He also led two of the school's self-studies, which are essential not only to its reaccreditation process but also to its continued growth and development."

"Accreditation standards change, thus our pre-pharmacy and pharmacy curricula have changed," West-Strum said. "Dr. Wilson was able to guide the faculty through these changes to ensure that our students receive the best pharmacy education in the nation and that we meet ACPE (Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education) standards. He deserves recognition for making our Pharm.D. program one of the best in the country."

West-Strum said Wilson should also be commended for creating the university's early-entry program, which enables prospective students to apply for admission to the School of Pharmacy during their senior year of high school, rather than after completing their pre-pharmacy coursework. Those selected are able to interact with pharmacy students and faculty as freshmen and are eligible for scholarships unavailable to other students.

"He has been a champion for this program, and it helps us recruit some of the best and brightest students from across the country to our school," West-Strum said.

Wilson's 43 years with the pharmacy school are packed with cherished memories. They include chasing monkeys that got loose and were roaming the school's marijuana farm; leaving the pharmacy building to head home after work and discovering his students had lifted his Ford Escort onto the sidewalk; or the time "David Gregory got the key to my moped from Becky (Wilson's wife), then rode it into the auditorium where I was teaching."

"I imitated Marvin in a skit, in which I 'borrowed' his moped with Becky's assistance, then proceeded to give a pharmacology lecture," Gregory said. "Not to be outdone, about two minutes after class was supposed to begin the next day, Marvin comes bursting through the lecture hall doors in a curly wig and walking fast to imitate me."

"It was classic, and the class literally lost it. He has a wonderful sense of humor."

Wilson's students and faculty colleagues caught glimpses of that humor many times, including those who watched him walk away with the crown at Kappa Epsilon's 2008 Womanless Beauty Pageant for charity. That "won the admiration of everybody, with the exception of my wife, sons and longtime executive assistant, Carla Bennett," said Wilson, who displays the winner's sash in his office, along with other pieces of memorabilia acquired during his Ole Miss tenure.

Bennett, Wilson's assistant for 25 years, began working for him in 1988, when she was 19 years old. "Like family" are the best words she can find to describe her relationship with her boss and Becky.

"I've been blessed to work with him," Bennett said. "We've seen each other through thick and thin, have cried on each other's shoulders and shared much laughter, all of which are cherished memories."

Just after Allen became dean, "Marvin told me, 'Once you get your feet on the ground, I'm going to retire,'" Allen said. "I got an email from him over winter break, telling me that he was going to retire in June."

Despite the early warning, Allen found the news "painful" but understands Wilson's desire to spend more

time with Becky, their children and grandchildren.

Their son Mike (BA 94), an attorney with the Curtis Law Group in Dallas, and his wife, Angela, have two boys, Luke, 9, and Wyatt, 6. Their son Dennis (BS 92, JD 95), a vice president of operations for Advanced Care Scripts in Orlando, and his wife, Susan, have two children, Drew, 14, and Bennett, 12, the Wilsons' only granddaughter.

Between trips to see the grandkids, Wilson has several hobbies that he expects to keep him busy.

"I like music, and I have a Lego Star Wars collection," he said. "I enjoy working in the yard, and I collect stamps and support the Rebels."

In fact, he has had season tickets for football, baseball and basketball for as long as he can remember and was a member of the official "stat" crews for football and basketball for several years.

Despite looking forward to some extended family time, Wilson isn't quite ready to cut his ties to the school, work and students of which he and Becky have grown fond since moving to Oxford in 1970. In fact, the pharmacy school created a **scholarship bearing Wilson's name** in April.

"In higher education, it's always a challenge to decide how close to get to students," Wilson said. "You get more out of them when you're closer, but you can't get too close."

On the other hand, that very challenge provided Wilson with some of his most cherished moments: watching his students mature and become successful adults.

"It doesn't get any better than that," he said.

Those wishing to congratulate Wilson on his semi-retirement or to let him know how much he meant to them can contact him at plmarvin@olemiss.edu. But if you're a football fan, you might just look for the Wilsons in the Grove on game days, just across the street from Faser Hall.

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